

Lifting the cross-ownership ban to
allow further media consolidation will not serve the public interest.

Besides the wholly predictable result of a single company controlling a town's TV stations, radio stations, cable company and only newspaper, critics warn that elimination of this rule will essentially signal the absorption of the newspaper business into the television industry, with a negative impact on the quality of print journalism. Newspaper companies "see savings in news gathering by combining with TV stations as a big plus," an industry analyst told the L.A. Times (9/14/01), giving an indication that the newly merged megacompanies would provide communities with less news, not more.

Pressure to drop the cross-ownership ban comes from companies like Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., whose recent acquisition of station operator Chris-Craft puts it in violation, giving it two TV stations and a newspaper in New York City. (News Corp. already had a waiver to operate one TV station and a newspaper in New York.) There are more than 40 markets with newspaper-broadcast combinations already, most 'grandfathered' in when the law was written in 1975. Other companies in violation of the law include the Tribune Co. which owns TV-broadcast combinations in Los Angeles, New York, Orlando and Chicago.

At a time of crisis, the dangers of such overwhelming concentration in media are more glaring than ever. The changes underway will make U.S. media even less diverse, more commercial and less accountable to the public.